

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated May 10, 2006. Non-elected claims 78-90 have been canceled, without prejudice in view of the Restriction Requirement. New claims 91-110 have been added. Thus, claims 46-77 and 91-110 are now pending.

Claim 46 stands rejected under Section 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over EP '096 in view of Iwane. This Section 103(a) rejection is respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

Claim 46 as amended requires “using a vacuum to set the pressure in the loading subsidiary chamber less than atmospheric pressure and substantially the same as the pressure in the main chamber and introducing inert gas into the loading subsidiary chamber and the main chamber, and using a vacuum to set the pressure in the unloading subsidiary chamber less than atmospheric pressure and substantially the same as the pressure in the main chamber and introducing inert gas into the unloading subsidiary chamber.” For example and without limitation, see page 16 of the instant specification.

EP '096 and Iwane each fail to disclose or suggest the aforesaid underlined features of claim 46. In particular, both EP '096 and Iwane fail to disclose or suggest “using a vacuum to set the pressure in the loading subsidiary chamber less than atmospheric pressure and substantially the same as the pressure in the main chamber and introducing inert gas into the loading subsidiary chamber and the main chamber, and using a vacuum to set the pressure in the unloading subsidiary chamber less than atmospheric pressure and substantially the same as the pressure in the main chamber and introducing inert gas into the unloading subsidiary chamber” as required by claim 46. Given that both references fail to disclose or suggest this feature, even

the alleged combination (which would be incorrect in any event) fails to meet the invention of claim 46.

Claim 65 requires that the “first substrate transport means operates to allow the substrate rotation means to be transported in the first direction.” The cited art fails to disclose or suggest this feature of claim 65.

Claim 75 requires that “the plurality of dipping mechanisms utilize a common crucible for dipping and are spaced apart and independent from one another so as to not necessarily move in conjunction with one another.” For example and without limitation, see Figs. 23-24. The cited art fails to disclose or suggest this feature of claim 75.

Claim 91 requires “first substrate transport means for transporting the substrate in a direction for dipping and unloading the substrate into and from said melt, second substrate transport means enabling transportation of said substrate in a second direction different from said first direction, and substrate rotation means capable of rotating the substrate by 360 degrees, wherein the first substrate transport means operates to allow the substrate rotation means to be transported in the first direction.” The cited art fails to disclose or suggest these features of claim 91.

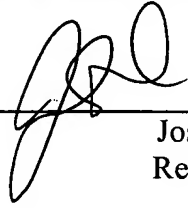
It is respectfully requested that all rejections be withdrawn. All claims are in condition for allowance. If any minor matter remains to be resolved, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned with regard to the same.

GOMA et al
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Respectfully submitted,

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